





CITY OF TAUNTON AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Temporary City Hall
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December 12th, 2019

Greetings,

Attached below you will find a copy of the Agricultural Commission's recently approved draft work plan. This document was created pursuant to the ordinance forming the Agricultural Commission one year ago last fall. Since then, the Agricultural Commission has been working with our regional planning agency, SRPEDD, to develop this plan, which is a starting point for our future work to improve Taunton's agricultural resilience.

A copy of this draft work plan can be found on the Agricultural Commission's webpage on the City's website. We welcome members of the community to review this plan and let us know your comments, questions, concerns, as well as if you'd like to get involved in any of the proposed action items outlined on the following pages. That feedback will be helpful in determining amendments to this plan, as well as help to determine potential timelines and teams for each action item.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Gray
Chair, Taunton Agricultural Commission



TAUNTON AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

DRAFT WORK PLAN

Version 5 (Last Updated: 12/13/2019)

GOALS	ACTIONS	ONGOING	SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM	WHO
1. Develop and grow the reach of the Agricultural Commission, create partnerships, and raise funding.	<p>A. Establish subcommittees as needed to involve residents in topic areas such as: community gardens, education, food access, Fraga Farm, fundraising, policy & governance, and public relations.</p> <p>B. Research, apply for, and secure state, federal, and private grants to expand the Commission's reach and influence.</p> <p>C. Explore the creation of a 501(c)3 for fundraising purposes, and to assist in securing grants. Pursue alternative funding methods to facilitate agricultural land preservation and expansion. Identify our partners and resources in terms of technical and financial assistance.</p> <p>D. Connect with Taunton area schools to recruit Agricultural Commission Junior Members.</p> <p>E. Develop standard operating procedures for commission meeting agenda preparation, the posting of agendas and minutes, and updating to the Commission's webpage and social media accounts.</p>	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

2. Develop an inventory of data and policies related to agriculture and food in Taunton.	<p>A. Research, collect, and synthesize available data from the Assessor's office, MassGIS, and SRPEDD on the agricultural potential of city-owned land, privately-owned agricultural land, land use, zoning, land managers, permanently protected conservation restrictions and APRs, Chapter 61 utilization, farmer's specialization (types of crops grown), including any data and examples of agriculture's economic impact on the city.</p> <p>B. Compile a list of policies pertaining to agriculture and food from the Assessor's Office, Board of Health, Zoning Ordinances, Conservation Commission, Housing Authority, Water and Sewer Department, and others.</p> <p>C. Gather data and information on food access in Taunton, including but not limited to: healthy food retail and grocery locations, free student lunch utilization, nutrition resources, SNAP and HIP utilization, food banks, soup kitchens, and food pantries.</p>	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
3. Collaborate with community educators and the school system to advance food, nutrition, and agricultural initiatives.	<p>A. Work with local educators in Taunton area schools to develop hands-on projects and programs for youth including but not limited to school gardens, farm and garden visits, demonstrations, and seasonal farm activities.</p> <p>B. Develop strategic partnerships with agricultural education providers including but not limited to the Soule Homestead Education Center, 4H, Scouts BSA, Girl Scouts, Bristol Aggie, YMCA, SEMAP, Young Farmer Network, local colleges and universities, Mass Farm to School, and Mass Ag in the Classroom.</p> <p>C. Explore the further development of food system related career tracks for Taunton-area schools students, i.e. culinary programs.</p> <p>D. Identify current school local food sourcing levels and work with the school district to expand locally-sourced food procurement.</p> <p>E. Take an inventory and promote the availability of the free school</p>	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

	<p>lunch program, breakfast after the bell, summer meals program, and other initiatives to keep our children well-nourished.</p> <p>F. Explore the opportunity to hire a FoodCorps service member to work directly with the schools on healthy food education through AmeriCorps.</p> <p>G. Partner with the Old Colony History Museum to promote and celebrate Taunton’s agricultural history and culture.</p>				
<p>4. Advocate for agricultural policies and decisions at the city, state, and federal levels when necessary.</p>	<p>A. Create and recommend the adoption of ordinances, policies, and procedures that are supportive of agriculture within Taunton.</p> <p>B. Request notification when other city boards and committees are addressing issues affecting agriculture. The Commission shall serve as advisors to all boards and officials making such decisions.</p> <p>C. Discuss issues with the state legislative delegation and work with the MA Food System Collaborative, MA Farm Bureau, Southcoast Food Policy Council, and SEMAP on issues affecting agriculture in Taunton.</p> <p>D. Determine where the Commission has a seat at the table, (e.g. the review of potential real estate developments on agricultural land).</p> <p>E. Determine the pros and cons of becoming a “Right-to-Farm” community.</p> <p>F. Examine zoning, Board of Health, Water Division, and other policies and regulations for conflicts/inconsistencies and to determine where regulations are too burdensome, and where further regulation is needed.</p> <p>G. Find existing policies and city programs that reduce fees for farmers (BOH, Water Dept, Sewer fees, etc.) and make this list more publicly available.</p>	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

	<p>H. Participate in making recommendations as the City pursues any right of first refusals on Chapter 61 land.</p>				
<p>5. Educate the community on agricultural topics and issues.</p>	<p>A. Create a public relations plan for the Commission.</p> <p>B. Be accessible and inclusive with all members of the community in the Commission’s activities.</p> <p>C. Create and curate an Agricultural Commission brand, website, social media profiles, publications, handouts, and plans for the purpose of engaging citizens with the local food system.</p> <p>D. Develop working relationships with farmers, gardeners, food retailers, legislators, regional planners, City staff, boards, and commissions.</p> <p>E. Organize and publicize agricultural-related activities and events (farmers markets, on-farm events, food festivals etc.).</p> <p>F. Promote and empower practicing and aspiring urban, suburban, and rural farmers.</p> <p>G. Promote existing agricultural operations in the City.</p> <p>H. Develop a working map of agriculture in Taunton for use by the general public to engage with growers.</p>	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
<p>6. Explore potential uses for the city-owned Fraga Farm property.</p>	<p>A. Work with the USDA, the Fraga Family, and the community, to establish a site plan for the property.</p>	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

7. Provide conflict resolution support on agricultural topics in the community.	<p>A. Work to resolve conflicts at earliest stages between neighbors, and between agricultural producers and city boards, and pursue training in conflict resolution and facilitation.</p> <p>B. Identify Commission member(s) to call when specific questions arise.</p> <p>C. Develop a fact sheet for residents explaining common regulation issues and normal farming practices, and provide the tools for residents to resolve issues on their own before involving the City.</p>	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
8. Strengthen the City's land protection efforts.	<p>A. Identify key city staff and members of any board and commissions that may deal with agricultural preservation and develop strategies for them to understand the opportunities and benefits of farmland protection.</p> <p>B. Catalyze the preservation of farmland in Taunton, and educate private property owners on preservation opportunities.</p> <p>C. Work with other boards and city departments to develop a prioritization process for the acquisition and preservation of land in Taunton.</p> <p>D. Determine the growth potential of state-owned ag land in Taunton (Taunton State Hospital fields, greenhouse, and Massasoit State Park Cranberry Bog) and work with the state to ensure the highest and best use of those resources.</p>	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
9. Provide resources to support urban agriculture and food industry entrepreneurs.	<p>A. Work with SRPEDD and other partners to develop an Urban Agriculture Plan to guide the overall growth of urban agriculture within the city, referencing plans, guides, and ordinances from other municipalities.</p> <p>B. Promote and collaborate on educational workshops related to urban agriculture.</p>	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

	<p>C. Educate residents about the need for soil testing, and assist them with the testing process.</p> <p>D. Identify what support services are needed for urban gardeners, and develop an urban agriculture resource list.</p> <p>E. Explore the development of a local food hub, commercial kitchen space, or other infrastructure that will support farm and food entrepreneurs and provide a pathway for gardeners to scale up production to commercial scales.</p> <p>F. Identify opportunities and challenges for farm and garden infrastructure in Taunton including, but not limited to farm stands, greenhouses, chicken coops, beehives, and small and large scale composting.</p>				
10. Promote community gardens throughout Taunton.	A. Support the development and growth of community gardens in the community.	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
11. Engage in Community-wide food system planning.	A. Identify work being done in the area on community-wide food system planning; create an inventory of partners and projects already active; and identify whether there is a need for a Community Food Assessment and Plan.	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
12. Collaborate on the adoption of urban forestry best practices in Taunton.	<p>A. Collaborate with other agencies and partners, such as the Greening the Gateway Cities Program, to increase tree plantings on both public and private grounds in the community.</p> <p>B. Strengthen public and private tree best management practices to ensure trees in the community are well-maintained for the public benefit.</p>	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD